

Christ Church Elbow Park Archives

Interview with Linda Graburn McNally and John Lacey

Christ Church Elbow Park Oral History Project 2020

Interviewer: Catherine Evamy

29 December 2020

2 PM

Zoom Interview

Transcript of Linda Graburn McNally and John Lacey

Interviewed on 29 Dec. 2020

Christ Church Elbow Park Oral History Project 2020

Interviewed by Catherine Evamy

Catherine Evamy, Interviewer

Linda Graburn McNally, Narrator

John Lacey, Narrator

Catherine Evamy: My name is Catherine Evamy, and the date is the 29th of December 2020. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I am distance interviewing by Zoom two friends who have historical ties to the parish of Christ Church, Elbow Park: Linda Graburn McNally and John Lacey. This interview is being recorded for the Christ Church archives and will be made available to researchers. You will be given a transcript of the recording and will have the opportunity to review it and reconsider any portions of the interview at that time. Is that all right with you?

Linda Graburn McNally: Certainly.

John Lacey: Absolutely.

Catherine: I do thank you again very much for taking the time to participate in this interview. It is really important and we're grateful for your participation. Is it okay to begin with you, Linda?

Linda: Yes, that's fine.

Catherine: Please tell us something about the Graburn family background and how they came to attend Christ Church.

Linda: My paternal grandfather came in 1904 from Winnipeg, because his brother-in-law Barney Toole had been transferred to Calgary by the CPR to look after all their landholdings in Calgary, and his wife had died in childbirth and left a young son. In this instance, a brother and sister married a brother and sister of another family. My grandfather and grandmother came to Calgary: he came to help my uncle, Barney Toole, with land work, and she took over the supervision and mothering of her nephew.

Catherine: Was your grandfather Mr. K.F.A. Graburn?

Linda: Yes. He was called Captain Graburn. He had been involved with the British Expeditionary Force, and attained the rank of captain, and I think was quite pleased with that rank, and then worked in Winnipeg for the civil government there.

Catherine: Then from Winnipeg, he came to Calgary?

Linda: You're correct.

Catherine: This is where the first records in the Christ Church archives possibly pick up your story, the fact that a Mr. (they just call him Mister in the Vestry Minutes) Mr. K.F.A. Graburn was the rector's warden in 1917.

Linda: Right. They were staunch Anglicans, and they would have gone to the cathedral from the time they arrived. I have a certificate of confirmation of my uncle Art Graburn from Christ Church. I knew that my grandfather had always been very involved and he had five sons.

Catherine: The parish of Christ Church was kind of a daughter church of the cathedral and was consecrated in 1913.

Linda: I have his certificate of confirmation. I think it would be fun to look at, because it would have been one of the first confirmations. I think it was either the 13th or 14th. John's just going to go and get it.

Catherine: Mr. K.F.A. Graburn, was rector's warden in 1917, four years after the parish was consecrated in 1913. Captain Graburn was your grandfather?

Linda: Yes, they always called him Captain Graburn.

Catherine: Do you know the name of your grandfather's wife?

Linda: Certainly, Ella (which was probably short for Isabella) Penella Toole.

Catherine: What were the names of your parents?

Linda: My father's name was William Nelson Graburn and he was born in Winnipeg in 1903.

Catherine: Your mother's name was Sybil, wasn't it?

Linda: She was Evelyn Sybil Martin. She was born in Whitehorse, Yukon.

Catherine: Your parents had how many children?

Linda: My parents had three daughters. My father was one of five boys. My father's mother died in 1919, and then grandmother Graburn, Granny Graburn, came from Ottawa to supervise and

assist her son with bringing up these five boys. My grandfather left their house on Glencoe Road to the church and that was the rectory.

Catherine: Do you know the address on Glencoe Road? Is it close to the Glencoe Club?

Linda: It's very close to the Glencoe Club. You know the little island that divides Glencoe Road?

Catherine: Yes.

Linda: It was just at the south end of the island on the east side of Glencoe Road and it was a big square box. We drove past the area, because I wanted to double-check the address, and in fact, they've divided the lot into two or three, and so it's very difficult to see exactly where it stood. Archdeacon Swanson lived there. Reverend Crump lived there and it was the rectory.

John: I think Tatchell lived there.

Linda: Probably. Certainly Bishop Crump did.

Catherine: I think from what I could find in the records, Reverend Horne lived there with his dog if it's in the same place.

Linda: I don't know. What year would that have been?

Catherine: I don't know the year because it's sketchy, but if we can go back to the gifting of the rectory by your grandfather, is that correct?

Linda: Right, yes.

Catherine: When was that?

Linda: I don't know, because I wasn't born until 1933, but I think it was around 1924/ 25, but I wouldn't think any sooner, because the youngest Graburn boy was George Graburn and he was born in 1913. I have a feeling that Ella died in 1919. He would've just been six. Granny Graburn stayed in the house until George was launched, so I would say probably 1924/25. The house then went to the church.

Catherine: That's great. We can do some more digging there. Linda, you were one of three daughters, and so were you and your sisters baptized at Christ Church?

Linda: I was baptized in Hanna, as was my oldest sister, because my father was crown prosecutor in Hanna, Delia and Craigmyle, so we didn't come back into Calgary until 1936. My younger sister, Judy, was certainly baptized in Calgary. She was born on August 15th, 1940, so she was baptized at Christ Church. We all went through Sunday school, and I was confirmed in 1946, I think. It could've been 1947, but at that point, he wasn't Bishop Crump, he was the rector. George Crawford was very involved. Have you got any record of George Crawford being involved in the church?

Catherine: I haven't looked at that. Now that you have mentioned it, somebody can go through the archives and find out what connections there were. How do you spell that?

Linda: C-R-A-W-F-O-R-D, George Tiller Crawford. George Crawford worked for the law firm Harvie, Arnold, and Crawford. As you well know, the Harvie family were very involved with Christ Church.

Catherine: Yes, I do know that. I know the name George Crawford from my involvement with the Glenbow Museum.

Linda: I know Colonel Woods and Mrs. Woods belonged to the cathedral. I don't know if they moved to Christ Church when it started, but certainly, Dorothy Harvie was a huge supporter. Because of your involvement with the Glenbow Archives, you understand Christ Church, because Eric Harvie was Glenbow and Dorothy really was Samaritan Club and Christ Church.

Catherine: Dorothy Harvie donated to the Junior League. You know her daughter, Joy Harvie. Joy Harvie was involved with me at the national church.

Going back to the Graburn family: you three daughters all have connections as young girls with Christ Church, and was anybody married there? Were you married there, Linda?

Linda: Yes, and my older sister, Ann, was married there. Yes, all three of us were confirmed and married at the church. As children, we went to church every week and my mother was very involved with the Altar Guild.

Catherine: That brings me to the carved panel that you have so kindly donated. Does that carved panel have any connection to the carvings in the sacristy?

Linda: No, unfortunately not.

Catherine: Can you tell me a little more about the carved panel, which I have not seen?

Linda: It's a reproduction of the Last Supper. My younger sister was in Mexico with our parents and she is a sculptress and was delighted with the work, and so Daddy said, well, if she really wanted it, he would bring it back. I'm just so pleased that it's finally at Christ Church, where I think it can be enjoyed by a lot of people.

Catherine: It was carved in Mexico by a Mexican sculptor?

Linda: Yes.

Catherine: Do you know the wood?

Linda: No, I am sorry.

Catherine: Because of COVID, I can't go down to the church and see it, at the moment. Could you describe it?

Linda: John, what measurements is it?

John: It's 60 by 40 inches, I think.

Catherine: This was Judy, who was in Mexico with your parents, is that right?

Linda: Yes.

Catherine: Were you there, too?

Linda: Not at that point, I wasn't.

Catherine: Where is Judy now?

Linda: Judy now is in Reno, Nevada.

Catherine: I was so sorry about your sister, Ann.

Linda: The wonderful thing was they had felt she was only going to live for, if we were fortunate, maybe six weeks, but she lived for another three years very happily, and saw a great-granddaughter get married. She was ready to go, Catherine. She had to deal with COPD and it was horrid. Her lungs just weren't working properly.

Catherine: Yes, it's very difficult.

Just moving from your sisters, I can recall a time when you lived on Prospect Avenue at the top of Carlton Street and you had this wonderful Great Dane dog called Marmaduke, I think.

Linda: Right. Oh, he was very big and he had a lovely time, because he always had our black Labrador to play with. In Calgary now, you would never ever think — I never gave a second thought to the dogs going out.

Catherine: We remember Marmaduke with pleasure.

How did Rio Frio come to get its name?

Linda: How is this related to Christ Church, dear?

Catherine: It's just a question other people have asked —

[laughter]

Linda: The reason was because Clint Roenisch already had all his notepaper printed, Sheep River Farms Limited. We had decided when we bought the land that we have that we were going

to put it in a company, so Ed drew up the paper, sent it off, and it was approved. Then we got a mournful call from Clint saying, "You can't possibly do that, because I've got all my stationery." Ed said, "Okay, Clint, I'll sell it to you for what it cost me." We were chuckling and he said, "We've got to have a company, though."

Rio Frio is a large river in Costa Rica, and Ed had been doing some work in Costa Rica and Ed had a shell company and said, "I've got this empty company Rio Frio, couldn't we use it?" and I said, "Why not? Sheep Creek is mighty cold." That's how Rio Frio got its name.

[laughter]

Catherine: I love that story because it's such an unusual name. Frits will be very happy to hear this story.

[laughter]

It doesn't have too much to do with Christ Church, but it is a charming story.

Could we move to a few questions for John? Then I'd like to come together at the end with a couple of questions for both of you. Does that work?

John: All right.

Linda: Sure.

Catherine: Okay, John, can you tell us a little bit about your background coming from England?

John: I was trained as a petroleum engineer and if you were a petroleum engineer in England, you had to join a major company, go offshore for a year or two, and come back. You could not have a family out where you were working, or rarely could. At that time, I had met my wife, Naomi, and we decided we didn't want anything like that. There were only two places in the world you could work in the oil business and also have as home. One was the United States and one was Canada, so we decided to come to Canada. Naomi, at the time, was just 18; I was just 23. We came out here and I started working for a Canadian company, which three weeks later, was bought out by BP, who I had turned down in England.

Catherine: That's British Petroleum. Was it called Shell British Petroleum in Canada?

John: Not Shell. I worked for Shell previously. I'd worked for Shell three years previously in Holland on a training course, and in fact, Shell even offered me a job when I came to Canada, but no, Shell is completely different. My brother-in-law actually ended up as chairman of Shell, but I did not work for Shell, even when I set up my own engineering company, because of possible complaints of nepotism and things of that nature.

Catherine: John, when did you come to Canada?

John: 1956, a week after the Stampede. We arrived and we had everything. We worked with a man called Dearing in London who was the agent-general for Alberta, who fixed up our boat passage, our train passage, and even our hotel. It was very good, indeed.

Catherine: How and when did you become involved with Christ Church?

John: We only really became involved with Christ Church in 1967, when we moved back into Elbow Park. We had gone to Christ Church. We started out by going to St. Stephen's, because we had an apartment half a block away from St. Stephen's, but then when we moved into Scarborough, and then out into the country. When we had some church events, such as the christening of our children, we came to Christ Church.

Catherine: Were the three children christened at Christ Church?

John: Yes, I believe all three were christened at Christ Church, although Martin may have been christened at St. Stephen's.

Catherine: Then you moved to the country, and then you moved into Elbow Park.

John: Yes, I've still got the house in Elbow Park. Interestingly enough, as we found out by surprise about two years ago, Linda and Ed actually lived in a house almost opposite us in Elbow Park.

Catherine: There are funny coincidences in life.

Linda: Catherine, the rector for the confirmation certificate is Horne and it's 1915.

Catherine: 1915, Horne, yes, okay.

Linda: Sorry for the interruption there.

John: Oh, that's good. It ties some more dates together.

Catherine: Thank you, Linda.

John, back to you. You were a scoutmaster or a scout leader at Christ Church?

John: That's correct. I think I did one or two years with the Cubs, and then about three years with the Scouts, as a scout leader. Obviously, I did it because Martin, at that time, was the right age to be going to these things and I got to know a lot of people, I must say. A young Peter Cohos was in the Cubs and the Scouts and a whole lot of the young people from Elbow Park were, at that time.

Catherine: Did you attend the cathedral?

John: No, later, we decided we enjoyed the mixed community of the cathedral, and so that's why we moved over there. That would be at about the time of probably Barry Curtis. The major move occurred at the time of William Pike. He was Marjorie Lee's nephew.

Catherine: Now that would be 1993. He was rector of Christ Church.

John, you have been so involved in so many community activities in Calgary, most particularly the Calgary Philharmonic. Do you want to tell us something about that?

John: The Calgary Philharmonic is strictly because of Naomi's love of music. My love is visual art, not music, but I made a commitment to ensure that the Philharmonic will keep going. When it went bankrupt in 2000, I formed the Friends which actually pulled the orchestra out of its problems and put it on a reasonably even keel, but orchestras never are on an even keel, you've got to keep working on them. So, I'm doing that.

I have much more involvement now in the visual arts, because we have Contemporary Calgary of which I'm on the board of and helped form, and also there is a big thing called the Lacey Prize for the National Gallery which I provide.

Catherine: Tell us about the national gallery prize.

John: What we do is biannually, we search the country to see the small galleries that are run by artists, and there's a fairly substantial cash prize for the gallery we pick, plus two runners-up, because that's where art starts — in those little galleries — and the National Gallery recognized this.

Catherine: Is your daughter Louise still painting?

John: Oh, yes, very much so. She's doing very, very well at it, too.

Catherine: This is really very informative for the background that you've provided here, both you, Linda, and you, John, but now I'd like to just ask —

John: Just before you do, I don't know whether you had the records on the Scouts. I think I may have some. I thought I could lay my hands on them. I tried to do it awhile ago. I couldn't find them, but I'll keep looking, because I think I have some records that might be helpful for the Christ Church. Christ Church had Troop Number One of the Scouts. That really is quite something. That means it is literally the first of the scouting establishments in Calgary.

Catherine: Thank you, that's useful.

John: The fellow who worked with me for most of the time was Doug/Dick Fullerton. He and I worked together on that.

Linda: You knew Carol well, didn't you?

Catherine: Carol Fullerton's family lived next door to me.

Linda: Her husband was Doug.

John: He worked with me before he got Lou Gehrig's Disease.

Catherine: I want to ask you each a different kind of question. Each of you have done so much in the community in different ways and I wonder what your wise words could be to the rising generation, either kids or grandkids? Linda?

Linda: I'm always a little leery, Catherine, giving any wise words. Probably, I think the importance of community, as we've seen, with you saying you weren't able to go to the church because of COVID. I think it accentuates how important, how much of a need there is for us to have a sense of belonging and contributing. I think it's not just passively accepting, but becoming involved, and doing as you're doing. You're getting to know the community in a much deeper kind of way and I think that's wonderful.

Catherine: That's interesting, Linda. What about values that you would offer for young people to think about?

Linda: I think that's where the doctrines, through so many generations, have held that there are certain basic qualities that allow a person to thrive, regardless of the problems that they have to endure or cope with. I think that the degree of ritual, the degree of awareness of the traditions that are a part of the church, I think the church is far more important. I hope they don't dumb the church liturgy down to a few trite phrases. I think part of the wonderful thing is the language of some of the prayers. It's so reassuring and stabilizing, I think.

Catherine: That's very nicely said. Some of the thoughtful young people are not necessarily finding the vocabulary and rituals of the church speak to their experience of technology and complexity.

Linda: It's very important, isn't it? To have a recognition that mankind is capable and people are complex. I think it would be very sad if we were drones.

Catherine: John, could you comment about the wise words for the rising generations?

John: I tend to become a bit trite on this, because it's a thing which I've been thinking about for a long time, and the thing young people have got to do is learn to cooperate. They've got to be brave in exploring and they've got to face challenges, accept challenges. I know a lot of people with various sound moral principles, but despite what you said, Dear, they have no connection with religion, in any way whatsoever.

Linda: That's fine.

John: There is a natural moral code within us all, I think.

Linda: You think a sort of Rousseau kind of thing?

John: Yes, sort of.

Linda: One hopes.

John: Yes.

Catherine: These are challenging thoughts.

John: I may say the whole of belief, and the rest of it, is constantly challenging. You sit here and you look at... I'm sitting in a beautiful garden here and you say to yourself, "Why? Why was it created? For what purpose? Where does it lead to? Why am I worrying about it? Because I don't know what's on the other side?" It's just a huge number of questions.

Catherine: This is an open-ended question.

John: Very good, yes.

Catherine: This has been so interesting and useful to speak with you and to get your memories and the facts that you brought forward, also. Is there anything else that you would like to add to our interview?

John: The only thing I want to add, and it's not really my job to do it, but the thing I do want to add is that, when we went to see David [Pickett], I wanted to make sure that people understood the long-term background of the Graburns with Christ Church. It had nothing to do with me; it had to do with the Graburns, and they had been involved since Christ Church began. It's important in pulling together the history to know the other families in the same way. It is important to have those threads running through the history you pull together. That's the only comment I'd make.

Catherine: I absolutely agree, John. This is exactly what we are trying to do through the History and Archives Committee, but like everything else, you have to have the volunteers to do it. They have to have the time. You have to have the people available to be interviewed. As I said to Linda before we started the interview, not all senior people are comfortable with technology, so they don't necessarily wish to be interviewed on Zoom. We have a block at the moment there.

John: I can tell you, even seniors who are familiar with technology are not happy with Zoom all the time.

[laughter]

Catherine: Yes, I know that for myself, but yes, this is exactly what we're trying to do. We've just done quite a lot of interviews on the church building itself and its iterations that it's gone through, plus the gardens and the people who participated in designing and working in the

gardens — some of the senior ladies you would know, Linda. Also we are doing an inventory and some research on the stained glass windows in Christ Church. This is very time consuming and it's very interesting. We've been able to make strides because Frits got the grant to hire the part-time archivist. It's all a complicated process of involvement.

Linda: Catherine have you come across a marvellous character who used to teach Sunday school? I remembered her; her name was Mrs. Potts. Mrs. Potts started a Montessori school and it must have been when the idea of Montessori would have been very new. It would have been maybe 1940, 1941, and Mrs. Potts was just a most intriguing character. At the great age of seven, I was quite intrigued with Mrs. Potts, so it would be fun if you could find out something about her.

Catherine: Strange you should say that, Linda, because when I've been researching the stained glass windows and the donors, the Potts' window is included.

Linda: Perfect.

Catherine: Then, of course, it's difficult to dig out the information from the archives and get the colour and the feeling of the person — you've just given it about Mrs. Potts. I can't get that from a few words in the archives, so this is where with these interviews and conversations that move all over the place are wonderful, because they bring out, as I say, a lot of colour and character that you can't find in just the few words in vestry minutes from 1914.

Linda: Yes, well, good.

Catherine: If you find any more interesting, papers or things that you would like to donate to the archives, we'd be very glad to receive them, and any other thoughts you have.

Linda: I will certainly give you this certificate of confirmation, because I think it's very fun. It's 1915 and I think it's Charles Horne, who had the first rectory.

Catherine: That's great. I do thank you very much, Linda, and you too, John. I'm glad to know that you're well and safe and got over that COVID that you had.

Linda: Yes, thank you.

Catherine: Thank you again and I wish you both a healthful and peaceful New Year, and hopefully we'll be able to meet in person rather than by Zoom.

John: That'd be nice.

Linda: For sure. Thank you.

Catherine: All right, bye, Linda, bye John.

Linda: Bye-bye, dear.

John: Bye-bye.